

REMARKS

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's thorough consideration provided the present application. Claims 1, 6, 7, 9 and 14-17 are now present in the application. Claims 1, 6, and 7 have been amended. Claims 2-5, 8 and 10-13 have been cancelled. Claims 1, 9 and 14 are independent. Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner has indicated that claims 9 and 14-17 are allowed. The Examiner has also indicated that dependent claims 5-7 would be allowable if rewritten to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants greatly appreciate the indication of allowable subject matter by the Examiner.

By the present amendment, independent claim 1 has been amended to include the subject matter of dependent claim 5, as discussed hereinbelow.

Priority Under 35 U.S.C. §119

Applicants thank the Examiner for acknowledging Applicants' claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. §119, and receipt of the certified priority document.

Drawings

Applicants have not received a Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review PTO-948 indicating whether or not the formal drawings have been approved by the Draftsperson. Since no objection has been received, Applicants assume that the drawings are acceptable and that no further action is necessary. Confirmation thereof in the next Office Action is respectfully requested.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-4, 8 and 10-13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Sugita, U.S. Patent No. 5,861,697, Hamatani, U.S. Patent No. 5,789,897, or Strachan, U.S. Patent No. 3,737,752. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Complete discussions of the Examiner's rejections are set forth in the Office Action, and are not being repeated here.

In light of the foregoing amendments to the claims, Applicants respectfully submit that these rejections have been obviated and/or rendered moot. As mentioned, independent claim 1 has been amended to include the subject matter of dependent claim 5, which was indicated by the Examiner as including allowable subject matter. Accordingly, it is believed that amended independent claim 1 and its dependent claims are in condition for allowance.

In view of the above amendments to the claims and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that all of the claims clearly define the present invention over the references relied on by the Examiner. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102 are respectfully requested.

Additional Cited References

Since the remaining patents cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject the claims, but rather to merely show the state of the art, no further comments are necessary with respect thereto.

CONCLUSION

All the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed and/or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently pending rejections and that they be withdrawn.

It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the Office Action, and that as such, the Examiner is respectfully requested to send the application to Issue.

In the event there are any matters remaining in this application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at (703) 205-8000 in the Washington, D.C. area.

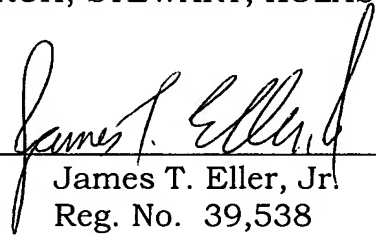
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Amendment filed on March 21, 2005
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If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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